

TO REDUCE THE FIRE RISK TO OUR COMMUNITIES WE NEED:



Community zone thinning on BLM land along Rockydale Road



Back country thinning on Forest Service land at Sugarloaf

Decades of fire suppression, past clearcut logging and recent years of drought have created some of the largest forest fires on record. Thousands of communities, including ours, are now at unnecessary risk from fire.

Protecting our communities, homes and firefighters from unnecessary risk should be the top priority for the Federal forest managers.

Whatever the remaining issues and controversies about managing our forests, there is little disagreement on how to protect our communities.

As our contribution toward community discussion of this important issue, we are offering a seven-part plan that was modeled on research by Forest Service fire scientists. We believe that this plan is a good basis for discussion and could serve as a blueprint for the next five years of federal forest fire management.

A Seven Part Community Protection Fire Plan

- 1) Do the most important work first. Make protection of communities from fires the Number One Priority. Selectively remove hazardous brush and dangerous ladder fuels in the Community Protection Zone.
- 2) Provide meaningful funding. This program should be a minimum of five years and be funded at \$2 billion a year nationally to go directly to making homes fire resistant and removing hazardous fuels in the Community Protection Zones. This funding should be secure - the Federal bureaucracy should not be able to shift this funding to other activities.
- 3) Assign forest workers to where they are needed. Shift personnel skilled in brush removal and thinning work from projects in the distant backcountry to the Community Protection Zones.
- 4) Carry out immediately all non-controversial fuel reduction projects. These are the vast majority of proposed projects. Where issues emerge, such as critical botanical or wildlife areas, work together with all interests to design ecologically sensitive fuel reduction activities.
- 5) Restore natural fires to have natural forests. Prescribed burns in cooler seasons can help to reduce fuel buildup and restore healthy forest habitats. Money spent on prescribed burning costs less than fighting large fires later.
- 6) Separate fire risk reduction and commercial logging. Thinning small trees and clearing brush around communities and homes will produce more meaningful results and less controversy than logging fire resistant big trees and building new roads into the backcountry.
- 7) Ensure full public participation in decision-making on federal forest fire management plans. Maintain the rights of citizen appeals to insure the best final plans.

We believe it is time to stop pointing fingers and to find common ground. Whatever our differences on other forest management issues, we do not believe there can be any disagreement that every community at risk deserves protection. The highest priority is to provide protection where it is most needed - in the Community Protection Zones. This should be the number one job for federal forest managers.

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